Plight of Railway Muslim Employees

SEVEN-YEAR PLAN SUGGESTED BY PRESIDENT

Annual Conference at Lucknow

"To do adequate justice to the Muslims the Government should execute without delay a seven-year plan, calculated to secure at least one-third proportion for Muslims in each and every grade and class of the Railway service on an All-India Basis," said Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, M.L.A. (Central), Honorary Secretary, All-India Muslim League, presiding over the annual session of the All-India Railway Muslim Employees Conference, held at Lucknow on November 29 last.

"This Association has been in existence for many years and the builders of the association deserve to be congratulated on the steps they have taken in making this association well-established in the country inspite of the several disadvantages and difficulties that they had to encounter.

"The first problem which is facing the association to day is that of its recognition. Although many years have elapsed since this association came into existence and proved its utility and strength, yet it has not been recognised by the Government of India. The reason advanced by them for not recognising it is that it is a communal body.

"The Muslims by virtue of their traditions, ideology and culture are a nation unto themselves and therefore it is no use saying that they cannot form a distinct and seperate class of people. It is a pity that Government has been consistently refusing to recognise a body of well-organised workers for the only fault that they are Muslim and because it voices the grievances of the Muslim employees in the Railways all over India.

> "In a country like India it is futile to create a unity of interest by means of artificial devices. The interest of the Hindus and the Muslims are not identical and in any joint association or organization the interest of those who are numerically less are bound to suffer when both of them are wanting the same loaf. The moment places are reserved in the services for any one section of the people, it becomes absolutely necessary for them to organise themselves to secure their just and due share and to see that what is promised to them is actually received by them.

"There cannot be any justice or logic in the Government not giving recognition to this association. On the contrary the Government should give every encourgement to this association so that the real feelings of the Muslim employees and their grievances reach the Government directly and authoritatively. In the interest of the administration itself, the sooner it is done the better.

"Now I come to the long-standing grievances regarding the inadequate representation of Muslims in services in the Railways all over India. For a period of nearly 20 years the Muslim members of the Legislative Assembly have been ventilating the grievances of Muslims with regard to their representation in the Railway services through all possible constitutional means.

Spirit Destroyed

"The Government tried to solve the difficulty by their Home Department Resolution No. F. 14 17 B./33 of the 4th July 1934, which reserved for Muslims 25% of the appointments. But when it came to giving effect to it, the spirit of the resolution was totally destroyed in as much as the Railway authorities went on promoting men in the lower grade to a higher grade and thus depriving the Muslims from getting their due share in the grade and tried to mislead the people by recruiting Muslims for the vacancies so caused in the lowest grade on the basis of the resolution to which I have just referred. By a skilful manoeuvring such as this, the Muslims were deprived of even that little advantage which they might have got under the Government Resolution.

"The Muslim League party in the Legislative Assembly brought to the notice of the Government, how the policy of securing to Muslims a due share in the services was being defeated by excluding a large number of posts in higher grades on technicle grounds and by filling up posts in the higher grades by promotions and similar other devices."

The Nawabzada then read out the statement, made by the Deputy Leader of the Muslim League Party in the Central Legislative Assembly on February 22 last when the party decided to withdraw from the Assembly as a protest against the attitude of the Government in this matter, and added :

Deterioration

"The last two years particularly, have witnessed a considerable deterioration owing to the attitude adopted by the Government. To quote one more instance, the latest report published by the Railway Board reveals that out of the total number of 40 gazetted officers, appointed in the State Railway only one is Muslim. This fact alone would be sufficient to indicate the gravity of the present situation.

"The annual wage bill of India class 1 Railways amounts to 36 crores of rupees. Of these 36 crores, only about four crores go to Muslims by way of salaries and the rest to the non-Muslims. It is clear from this that a grave injustice is being done to the Muslim Nation and it is suffering a loss of several crores every year.

"These figures include only the salaries and other monetary benefits accruing from service in the Railway Department. But Railways are not employers of labour alone, they play an important part in the economic life of the country. They buy stores of the value of many crores and also have their works carried out by contractors. The business community reaps enormous profits from these contracts.

Heavy Loss

"As Muslims are seldom represented in the higher official grades of railway services, Muslim commerce, industry and trade have to suffer a heavy loss on account of the entire absence of any patronage from the Railway Department. Muslim tradesmen and the traveling public cannot obtain the same transportation facillities as non-Muslims do. Even the vending contracts at railway stations and on trains are given almost entirely to non-Muslims.

> "In short, this important national asset, which represents a capital investment of eight hundred crores and an annual turn over of over one hundred crores is administered in such a manner that its benefits are shared by the Europeans and the Hindus, the Muslim share being more or less nominal.

Muslim Demand

The Muslims demand their legitimate rights and no more and shall not accept anything less. They have their share of the responsibility along with others for the national debt of eight hundred crores with which the railways in India have been built. They want their due share of the benefits accruing from the administration of this national asset.

"If the will is there justice can be done overnight as it was done in Czechoslovakia under the award of Lord Runciman. But Muslims do not expect a change overnight. Nor are they prepared to wait indefinitely.

"About eight months ago a detailed memorandum was sent to H. E. the Viceroy by Mr. M.A. Jinnah, leader

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